



L.A. OPPORTUNITY  
YOUTH COLLABORATIVE

# IMPACT REPORT



# 20 20



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# WHO WE ARE

Los Angeles Opportunity Youth Collaborative is a collaborative of over 100 partners from public agencies, community-based organizations, foundations, youth, and educational institutions.

WHO WE ARE

## OUR MISSION

## OUR VISION

**Building multi-sector partnerships** to improve education and employment outcomes for transition age foster youth to thrive.

Transition age foster youth in Los Angeles County have the knowledge and skills to allow them to **achieve economic mobility and flourish** in their personal lives.

The OYC builds partnerships across sectors to improve education and employment outcomes for transition age foster youth (TAY). **We work collaboratively with partners, including government agencies, education institutions, philanthropic and community-based organizations, youth and private sector employers.** Utilizing the five strategic priorities below, we believe we can improve the systems designed to support TAY through a long-term and sustainable collective impact approach:

MAKING CONNECTIONS

BUILDING CAPACITY

TRANSFORMING SYSTEMS

ELEVATING YOUTH VOICE

PROMOTING AWARENESS

“The Opportunity Youth Collaborative is a profound example of how cross-sector partnerships can create innovation. When everyone contributes, working together in concert, we can ensure our transition age foster youth leave care with the resources, skills and ability to achieve their dreams.”

**ANGELA PARKS-PYLES**

Department of Children and Family Services

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**OUR  
CO-CONVENERS**

**Alliance for Children’s Rights** is the backbone agency for the LA Opportunity Youth Collaborative, and the OYC is co-convened in partnership with **UNITE-LA** and **John Burton Advocates for Youth**.

**ALLIANCE  
for CHILDREN’S  
RIGHTS**



# MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



## Dear Friends,

**Even in the midst of a global pandemic, economic crisis, and racial justice movement, the LA Opportunity Youth Collaborative partners have made significant progress this past year, and our first impact report demonstrates the power of this collective.**

When we see young people who have experienced foster care, we see their potential, their value, and limitless possibilities. Our young people are the key drivers to a thriving economic future. The best way to cultivate their talent is by providing opportunities for young adults to grow, learn, and develop the essential skills needed to persist through their educational journey and chosen career path. We also see young people leading the charge in reimagining how systems serve transition age foster youth and believe their voices play a vital role in co-creating more equitable programs and services to prepare young adults leaving foster care with the skills and support they need to achieve their dreams.

Together our collective achievements have worked to enhance and grow the number of opportunities available to foster youth and young adults—and the larger ecosystem of organizations serving foster, juvenile, justice, homeless and low-income youth. Our collaboration with the Department of Children and Family Services and the Los Angeles Performance Partnership Pilot (LA P3) has amplified our impact.

We know that every young person who experiences foster care has the ability—and deserves the chance—to achieve their dreams. We look forward to working in collaboration with OYC partners agencies to innovate and create more opportunities.

**The power of this collective is strong and together we are making a lasting impact on the future for Los Angeles youth.**

In partnership and gratitude,

**LAURI COLLIER**

*Director of the LA Opportunity Youth Collaborative*

# MESSAGE FROM A YOUNG LEADER



## Alicia Smith

### MESSAGE FROM ALICIA SMITH

Throughout my journey, I never had a clear vision of what my life could look like once I became an independent adult. From a young age, I always knew I wanted to help others, but I did not know in what capacity. I joined the Los Angeles Opportunity Youth Collaborative Young Leaders program as a sophomore at Cal State University, Dominguez Hills.

Over the past year, all of my lived experiences and my vision for the future finally became clearer, as I experienced different opportunities of social service through the program. I learned I am passionate about education, mental health, civic engagement, advocating for myself and my peers, and racial justice, and the OYC was there to support me along the way.

Through the program, I have learned essential advocacy skills such as public speaking, introspection, interpersonal communication, setting boundaries, and so much more. I am able to utilize these skills in the OYC events I participate in which, in turn, have yielded new connections for me. Because of the OYC, I have gotten several opportunities to strengthen my professional network and to advocate for foster youth in impactful ways. As young leaders, we are fortunate to be a part of the DCFS Directors Advisory Council where we work closely with supervisors within DCFS, community-based organizations, and other supportive adults in the lives of foster youth, and I have a well-deserved seat at the table to make change happen and to help bolster positive outcomes for foster youth.

What makes the OYC special is its focus on elevating foster youth voices. Although professional practitioners are trained to support a young person in the child welfare system, it is the young people themselves who have the innate understanding and lived experiences that can authentically inform what that support should truly look like. The OYC understands this, practices this, and teaches this to other organizations because they recognize the incredible impact it could have to actually see a dynamic group of innovative youth leading us into a progressive future.

In service and with gratitude,

**ALICIA SMITH**

*OYC Young Leader*

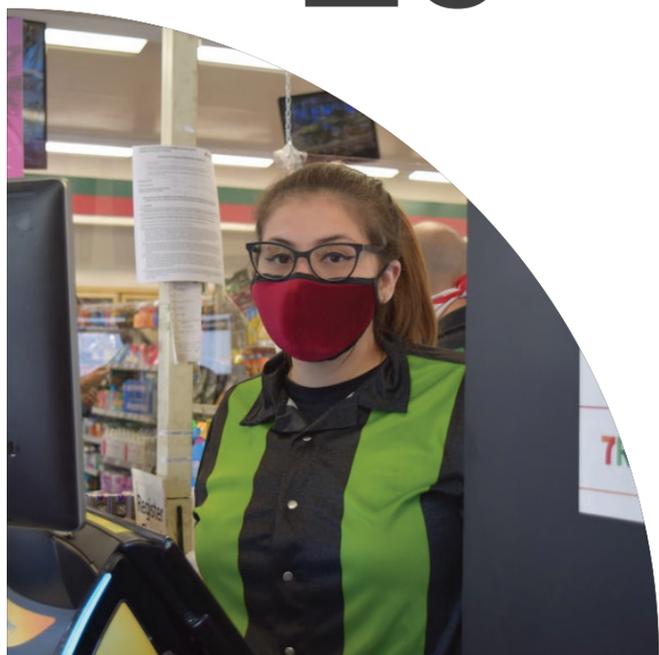
# HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2020

## OUR COLLECTIVE IMPACT

The OYC reached more than

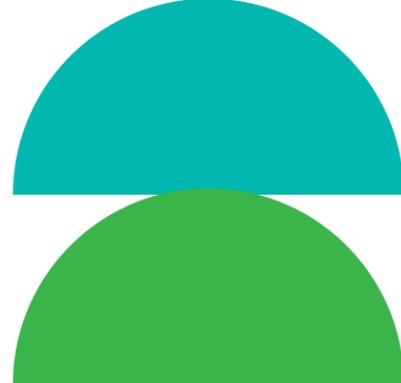
# 1,600 young adults

across our three campaigns.



*"There was a time in my life when I felt I wasn't good enough because life was beating me up back and forth, but now I have the power to speak up for other people."*

**Eustolia Farias**  
OYC Young Leader



# 866 youth

in foster care were placed in paid work experience, an increase of over 15% from the previous year.



# \$32.4 million dollars

in funding for youth housing and employment successfully advocated for by the OYC Young Leaders



## OUR IMPACT

# 70 organizations

including FFAs and STRTPs, FFAs and STRTPs are now required to include college and career exploration in their programming and provide trainings to caregivers.



Increase from 33% to

# 68% FAFSA

completion among high school seniors



# TRAININGS AND CONVENINGS

The OYC hosts trainings and convenings throughout the year to support transition age youth in foster care and empower the partners and providers who work with them.



**28** trainings and convenings for practitioners with

**3,652** total attendees  
372% increase in attendees from 2019

**64** convenings

connecting young adults who experienced foster care to systems leaders with

**3,963** practitioners and youth attendees



# INCREASING AWARENESS

During a year when access to resources is critical, the OYC remained a steady source of information for foster youth and partners.

**42%** increase in newsletter engagement



**64,800+** contacts

reached by the OYC newsletter



*"The OYC unites the many and varied voices working to support our young people transitioning from foster care. Their collective power to affect change cannot be underestimated."*

Karen Bass  
Congress-member

Fact sheets created to support TAY youth during COVID reached

**6,600+** youth

The OYC also launched a social media presence to connect TAY with resources



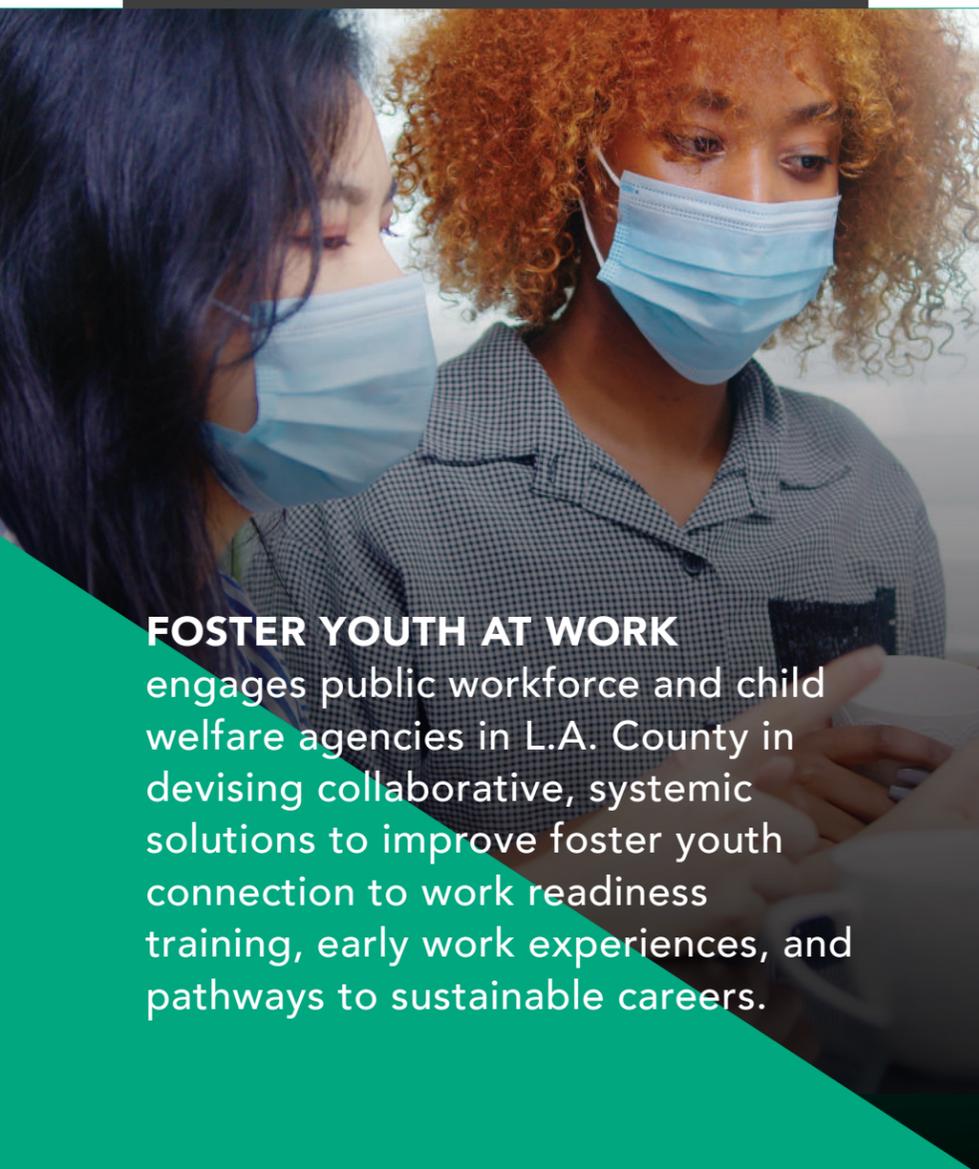
“We must all believe in the capabilities and capacities of all of our young people, especially those in the foster care community. OYC not only believes, but builds pathways for educational and professional success for all.”

**ROBERT SAINZ**

President and Executive Director, New Ways to Work



# FOSTER YOUTH AT WORK



**FOSTER YOUTH AT WORK** engages public workforce and child welfare agencies in L.A. County in devising collaborative, systemic solutions to improve foster youth connection to work readiness training, early work experiences, and pathways to sustainable careers.

Campaign launched by the OYC in 2013

Convened by the Alliance for Children's Rights and UNITE-LA

"When this campaign was first launched, only 80 foster youth were enrolling in the County's youth jobs program each year. This year, 866 foster youth participated in a paid work experience thanks to the collaborative leadership of L.A. County's child welfare and workforce systems. UNITE-LA is proud to continue to convene this impactful campaign with the Alliance for Children's Rights."

**David Rattray**  
President & CEO, UNITE-LA



## UNIVERSAL REFERRAL PROCESS

OYC Foster Youth at Work successfully created, piloted, and launched the Universal Referral Process, which is now a web-based automated referral system to improve connections between DCFS and the county's seven workforce boards.

From July 2019 - June 2020, **866 youth in foster care were placed in paid work experience, an increase of over 15% from the previous year.**

The OYC partnered with the South Los Angeles Empowerment Zone (SLATE-Z) Foster Youth Committee to learn about the universal referral process from the ground up. The committee is **working toward increasing foster youth enrollment in subsidized work experience by 50%**. As of quarter two, of the fiscal year (July 2020 - June 2021), SLATE-Z has reached 100% of the goal.



## ADVANCING YOUTH EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN RESPONSE TO COVID

Working with Los Angeles County's workforce system, we successfully advocated to maintain youth employment funding despite the county's billion dollar-shortfall. While subsidized work experiences have halted for many workforce providers, OYC partners successfully advocated for the County Board of Supervisors to maintain the **\$20.8M budget for the Youth@Work program**, with **\$2.5M** earmarked for youth in foster care.



## GOING ONLINE WITH TAY WOW CURRICULUM

Historically, TAY completed 20 hours of the TAY WOW work-readiness curriculum and 100 hours of work experience at a worksite. In March, the entire curriculum was converted to a virtual format by providing technical support to **56 sites, reaching 141 workforce system practitioners.**

### PARTNERS

Alliance for Children's Rights

Foothill Workforce Development Board

iFoster

Los Angeles City Economic and Workforce Development Department

Los Angeles County Office of Child Protection

Los Angeles County Workforce Development, Aging & Community Services Department (WDACS)

Pacific Gateway Workforce Development Board

Southeast L.A. County Workforce Development Board

South Bay Workforce Investment Board

UNITE-LA

Verdugo Workforce Development Board

## OYC Young Leader, Madonna Silver, participated in the Youth@Work program the summer after she finished high school.

Through the Youth@Work Program at Glendale Youth Alliance, Madonna received her first job at the Treasurer's Office of the Glendale Department of Water and Power. During her time in the Treasurer's Office, Madonna gained valuable office skills and first-hand knowledge of how governmental offices operate on a day-to-day basis. Equally important, Madonna's network grew, and the relationships she formed helped her land a work-study job at UCLA.

In her testimony to the Board of Supervisors in July 2020, Madonna cited her experience during the program and said, "the Youth@Work program must remain funded because, now

more than ever, unemployment is disproportionately impacting foster youth, who are highly susceptible to financial insecurity. The continuation of this program would provide foster youth like myself equal opportunity to succeed in the workplace and secure a means of financial stability."

**The repercussions of cutting the Youth@Work program would set back an entire generation of young people, but with the fierce advocacy of the workforce development system, and the OYC Young Leaders, a motion passed to restore the entire \$20.7 million budget.**

Shortly after, the Glendale Youth Alliance offered Madonna a position at Viper Staffing Services, a remote outreach position, providing her with financial independence and allowing her to persist through her educational goals with financial stability.

# MADONNA'S STORY

# OYC YOUNG LEADERS

Campaign  
launched by the  
OYC in 2015

Convened by  
the Alliance for  
Children's Rights

"As the backbone for the LA OYC, the Alliance for Children's Rights has had the privilege of witnessing the growth trajectory of the OYC Young Leaders. Their fierce dedication and impact as advocates—speaking from their own lived experience—demonstrates the importance of using our platform to amplify the voices and vision of the young people in our communities."

**Jennifer L. Braun**  
President & CEO,  
Alliance for Children's Rights

**THE OYC YOUNG LEADERS PROGRAM** is a one-year leadership program for young adults in leadership development, public speaking, advocacy, and more. We believe young adults should join us as equal decision makers to co-create and implement the services programs that serve them. The OYC works to clear the path for young adults to exercise their power, and we offer our platform as a means to amplify their voices and vision.

Even more critical during a challenging year, the OYC young leaders attended county meetings, panels, and focus groups to advocate for the needs of transition age foster youth.



## ADVOCATED FOR \$32.4M IN FUNDING FOR HOUSING AND EMPLOYMENT

The Young Leaders provided testimony to the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors about the struggle of foster youth and the need to increase Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention funding for TAY from 8% to 18%, resulting in \$11.7 million dedicated to TAY housing and supports, which was unanimously approved.

Nine weeks into the pandemic, California's **unemployment rate rose** to a record high and Los Angeles County was facing a **\$1 billion budget shortfall**. The Young Leaders provided testimony to the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors about the importance of employment programs. **The Board unanimously approved funding for Youth@Work following the Young Leaders testimony, resulting in \$20.7 million dedicated to the Youth@Work program, with \$2.5 million for foster youth.**



## PARTNERING WITH YOUNG ADULTS TO INFORM SYSTEMS

The DCFS Director's Advisory Council Meeting is co-facilitated by the Young Leaders and DCFS and has created a forum to hear directly from young adults who experience foster care and co-create recommendations to enhance DCFS policies and practices.

"The OYC gave me a clear perspective on how I can contribute. I started feeling like it was possible for me to do some real change."

**Dimitri Dunn**  
OYC Young Leader



## AUTHENTIC YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IS PRIORITIZED

The Young Leaders have led panel discussions for **68 agencies and networks** at the local, state, and national level reaching more than **3,900 attendees** to promote authentic youth engagement and empowerment of youth who experience foster care. In addition, we have advocated for the equitable compensation of young adults, whose expertise is lived experience in the Los Angeles child welfare system.



## REACHING WIDER YOUNG AUDIENCES

In addition to launching a social media page to connect young adults to other resources, our team created and distributed fact sheets to help youth understand the support and services available to them during the pandemic, reaching over 22,000.

## PARTNERS

Coalition for Responsible  
Community Development

Los Angeles County Department  
of Children and Family Services

Los Angeles Reproductive Health Equity Project

National Foster Youth Initiative

United Friends of the Children

# TANEIL'S STORY

**Taneil started her advocacy journey younger than most. When she was in foster care, she often had to advocate for her education and placement needs to be met.**

After all, she knew what was best for her. However, like so many others in care, her voice was hushed by adults in the room. Now an OYC Young Leader and sophomore at LA Trade Technical College (LATTC) with Project Tipping Point, Taneil has dreams of becoming a lawyer and advocating for people who are often silenced.

In January 2020, Taneil was asked to provide her testimony in front of the LA County Board of Supervisors to support increased funding to prevent youth homelessness. Taneil jumped

at the opportunity and provided the Board of Supervisors with a compelling argument they could not disregard. As a result, the motion was passed.

This victory set the tone for the rest of the year. Eager to utilize her voice and enact change within several foster youth spaces, Taneil showed up with enthusiasm, and her heart for justice became apparent every time she spoke. She led focus groups, participated in three panels, and became a vital voice of the DCFS's Director's Advisory Council. Her advocacy has sparked several conversations regarding the engagement of youth in care, explicitly addressing racial inequities within the child welfare system. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, Taneil's determination did not falter despite suddenly losing her job. She maintained good grades and kept her commitment to the OYC. Despite the hardships, Taneil always came ready to address the issues, spark conversations, and collaborate in order to create a brighter tomorrow for the youth who come after her.

# FOSTER YOUTH COLLEGE ADVANCEMENT PROJECT (FYCAP)

Campaign launched by the OYC in 2017

Convened by John Burton Advocates for Youth (JBAY)

"JBAY is proud to have led the efforts alongside our partners to develop long term systems change solutions that will impact youth in LA County for years to come."

**Amy Lemley**  
Executive Director,  
John Burton Advocates  
for Youth

FYCAP is committed to increasing postsecondary educational attainment for youth in the foster care system, whether it be career technical education or a 2-year or 4-year degree.



## INCREASING FINANCIAL AID APPLICATION RATES

In partnership with key county departments, school districts and stakeholders, JBAY spearheaded an initiative that successfully improved the rate of FAFSA completion for high school seniors in the foster care system from **33% to 68%**. This exceeded the statewide rate of completion amongst the general population at 57%.

## COLLEGE AND CAREER GOALS EMBEDDED IN DCFS CONTRACTS AND FORMS

Over 70 organizations, including FFAs and STRTPs, are **now required to include college and career exploration in their programming**. This includes a 3-hour training requirement for all caregivers on college-planning and matriculation.



## TRAINING RESOURCE PARENTS ON COLLEGE PLANNING

As a result of a new training requirement, 1,700 Resource Parents were trained on the Turning Dreams into Degrees curricula. An independent evaluation of the curricula showed a positive impact, with findings such as a **96% increase in resource parents' belief that college can be a path for all students**.

## CONNECTING STUDENTS TO MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

JBAY and the LA County Department of Mental Health established free on-campus mental health services for foster youth students at eight community colleges to increase college persistence. In collaboration with the California Community College Chancellor's Office, best-practices from this innovative model were compiled into a toolkit for colleges and providers.



## TRAINING SOCIAL WORKERS TO INCREASE COLLEGE-READINESS

JBAY and DCFS partnered to evaluate the efforts of the College Bound Antelope Valley Pilot, which provided targeted training, social work specific tools, and on-going coaching to a cohort of social workers and supervisors to better support their youth into postsecondary educational pathways showing positive results.

"For the students who have received mental health services, it has been really productive for them. I can see the difference in them. It's been a nice addition for our foster-youth program to be able to help the student holistically."

**Dora Lozano**  
College of the Canyons

### PARTNERS

Alliance for Children's Rights

Children's Law Center of California

Foster and Kinship Care Education

Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services

Los Angeles County Office of Education

Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health

Los Angeles County Probation Department

Los Angeles County Office of Child Protection

Los Angeles Unified School District

UNITE-LA

United Friends of the Children

Los Angeles County Workforce Development Aging and Community Services

All 30 campus-based foster youth support programs across Los Angeles County's public and private colleges and universities



# TOBIAS' STORY

**Every year, billions of dollars in federal and state financial aid go unused because eligible students do not complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or California Dream Act Application (CADAA).**

In 2017, JBAY launched the Foster Youth FAFSA Challenge, a statewide initiative to increase financial aid applications among high school seniors in the foster care system. One of those applicants, 17-year-old Tobias Herrera, said he wasn't aware of how much aid he could

receive until a counselor at Palmdale High School in Los Angeles County contacted him about being a foster youth.

**"I knew FAFSA was just free money, but I didn't know a lot of people actually got it," he said. "I thought I had to go through some grueling process for a couple of thousand bucks to pay for books."**

Herrera didn't learn until that moment that he had been in foster care since age 15. While he lived with his grandparents, he wasn't aware they were also his legal foster parents. His counselor encouraged him to indicate his foster youth status on the FAFSA, which opened up more aid and opportunities for him when he attended Antelope Valley College in Fall 2020. Herrera received the full Pell Grant award of \$6,345.

# Thank You to Our Partners & Supporters

We are proud to recognize the many public agencies, community-based agencies, young leaders, networks, and foundations that have championed our collective work last year.

## OUR STEWARDSHIP GROUP:

Alliance for Children's Rights  
 Coalition for Responsible Community Development  
 City of Los Angeles Economic & Workforce Development Department  
 First Place for Youth  
 iFoster  
 John Burton Advocates for Youth  
 LA County Department of Children and Family Services  
 Los Angeles County, Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services  
 Los Angeles County Office of Education  
 Los Angeles LGBT Center  
 Los Angeles Unified School District  
 Los Angeles Opportunity Youth Collaborative Young Leaders  
 South Bay Workforce Investment Board  
 UNITE-LA

## OUR SUPPORTERS

We appreciate our generous partners who make our work possible. Our deepest gratitude to this dedicated community of funders.

America's Promise Alliance  
 Angell Foundation  
 The Aspen Institute for Community Solutions  
 Ballmer Group  
 Carl & Roberta Deutsch Foundation  
 Conrad N. Hilton Foundation \*\*  
 Goodwin Family Memorial Trust  
 Hire Opportunity Coalition  
 Los Angeles Areas Chamber of Commerce Foundation  
 LAX Integrated Express Solutions  
 Pritzker Foster Care Initiative \*\*  
 The Ralph M. Parsons Foundation  
 The Stuart Foundation

## OUR PARTNERS

A Sense of Home  
 Alliance for Children's Rights\*\* ^^  
 Antelope Valley College  
 Antelope Valley America's Job Center of California (JVS)  
 Anthony & Jeanine Pritzker Family Foundation  
 Archdiocese Youth Employment  
 Aspen Forum for Community Solutions  
 Brotherhood Crusade  
 Cal Poly Pomona University  
 Cal State University Dominguez Hills  
 Cal State University Long Beach  
 Cal State University Los Angeles  
 California Opportunity Youth Network  
 California Youth Connection  
 CASA-Los Angeles  
 Cerritos College  
 Children's Hospital Los Angeles  
 Children's Institute  
 Children's Law Center of California  
 Citrus College  
 City of Los Angeles Economic & Workforce Development Department\*\*  
 Coalition for Responsible Community Development\*\*  
 College of the Canyons  
 Compton College  
 Conrad N. Hilton Foundation  
 East LA College  
 El Camino College  
 Extraordinary Families  
 Faith Foster Families Network  
 First Place for Youth\*\*  
 FirstStar  
 Foothill Workforce Development Board  
 Foster and Kinship Care Education  
 Foster Care Counts  
 Foster Ed  
 Foster Nation  
 Foster Together Network  
 Friends of the Children - Los Angeles  
 Glendale Community College  
 Glendale Verdugo Workforce Development Board  
 Glendale Youth Alliance  
 Goodwill Southern California  
 Hathaway-Sycamores  
 Happy Trails for Kids  
 Hillsides  
 Hire Opportunity Coalition  
 iFoster\*\*  
 John Burton Advocates for Youth\*\* ^^  
 Journey House  
 L.A. Compact  
 LA Gay & Lesbian Center\*\*  
 LA Tech  
 Learn4Life  
 Long Beach City College  
 Long Beach Forward  
 Los Angeles City College  
 Los Angeles County Chief Executive Office  
 Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services\*\*  
 Los Angeles County Department of Human Resources  
 Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health  
 Los Angeles County Office of Child Protection  
 Los Angeles County Office of Education\*\*  
 Los Angeles County Probation Department  
 Los Angeles County Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services\*\*  
 Los Angeles County Workforce Development Board  
 Los Angeles Harbor College  
 Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority  
 Los Angeles Opportunity Youth Collaborative Young Leaders\*\*  
 Los Angeles Performance Partnership Pilot  
 Los Angeles Pierce College  
 Los Angeles Reproductive Health Equity Project  
 Los Angeles Southwest College  
 Los Angeles Trade Tech College  
 Los Angeles Unified School District  
 Los Angeles Valley College  
 Loyola Marymount University  
 Mount Saint Mary's College  
 Mt. San Antonio College  
 National Center for Youth Law  
 National Foster Youth Institute  
 New Ways to Work  
 Office of Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti  
 Olive Crest  
 Pacific Gateway Workforce Innovation Network  
 Para Los Ninos  
 Pasadena City College  
 Peace4Kids  
 Public Council  
 Ready2Succeed  
 REDF  
 ReLAY Institute (ReConnecting Los Angeles Youth)  
 Rio Hondo College  
 Safe Place for Youth  
 Santa Monica College  
 School on Wheels  
 Seen and Heard  
 South Bay Workforce Investment Board\*\*  
 South East Los Angeles County Workforce Development Board  
 South Los Angeles Transit Empowerment Zone (SLATE-Z)  
 St. Anne's  
 The Academy Project  
 The Community College Foundation  
 The Emporium  
 The Imprint  
 The Rightway Foundation  
 Think of Us  
 UCLA YouthSource Center  
 United Friends of the Children\*\*  
 UNITE-LA\*\* ^^  
 University of California Los Angeles  
 University of Southern California  
 Verdugo Workforce Development Board  
 Walden Family Services  
 Wayfinder Family Services  
 Wellnest Los Angeles  
 West Los Angeles College  
 Yes2Jobs  
 Yo Watts

\*\* denotes Stewardship Board ^^ denotes co-convenor